

# Differentiated Instruction

## Special Needs

### Hearing Impairments

A child's hearing loss is generally defined by when the loss occurred. The loss may be classified as congenital or acquired. A congenital hearing loss is caused by things that happen before or at birth. Examples include a hereditary hearing loss or a hearing loss caused by things that happened in the womb. An acquired hearing loss appears after a child's birth and may be the result of a specific disease or an injury.

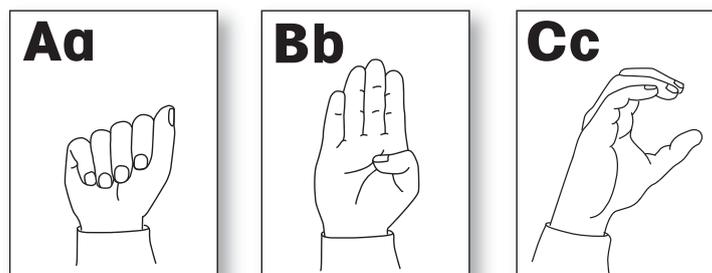
#### Children with hearing impairments:

- depend on all of their senses, especially vision, to learn new concepts.
- will understand less (not more) when you exaggerate lip movements or speak overly loud.
- should always be seated where they can see your face.
- often pretend to understand something by nodding their head.
- may depend on sign language as a method of communication.
- may or may not benefit from a hearing aid.
- may read lips for clues about what you are saying.



#### Teaching Strategies

- Not all children who are hearing impaired will use sign language. However, if children in your class will be using sign language to communicate, it is important that you learn some simple signs to use with them. Sign language is fun and relatively easy to learn with a little practice. Encourage other children in the class to learn some functional signs as well. Visit [www.deafness.about.com](http://www.deafness.about.com) for some tips on using sign language with young children.
- If a child in your classroom uses sign language, display each letter sign on your alphabet wall cards. Many wall cards are available in English, Spanish, and sign language. In addition to providing young children who have a hearing loss with a way to communicate, sign language can also be effective for children who have language delays. Sign language is a fun way to encourage children to interact and communicate with one another.



- Use visual representations to introduce new concepts. Create picture cards (photographs are preferable), and label the cards according to their sequence (first, second, third). Use normal vocabulary, but be prepared to restate, point to, or demonstrate new concepts.
- Be sure children are seated where they can see and hear you. If you know a child has some residual hearing, periodically ask the child questions to determine if the child understands what you are saying.

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### Cognitive Challenges

A child with cognitive challenges has delays due to limited skills in processing information, learning new concepts, or solving problems. The terms *developmental delay* and *cognitive delay* describe these same challenges. These terms are used interchangeably to describe a pattern of learning that is slower than that of typically-developing children. This slower development may be in the areas of basic motor skills, speech and language skills, or self-help skills. Cognitive delays are not generally cured, but they can be minimized.

#### Children with cognitive delays:

- may experience difficulty understanding new concepts.
- function best when routines are maintained.
- benefit from the repetition of lessons that present new concepts or tasks.
- benefit when new concepts and activities are broken down into smaller steps.
- function best with encouragement that motivates them to keep trying.
- may need assistance to generalize information across various settings and environments.



#### Teaching Strategies

- Present new concepts in short segments and use as many of the child's senses as possible.
- Let the child know what is going to happen next. Tell the child before the routine is changed.
- Plan activities that encourage opportunities to practice a new concept repeatedly.
- Use short sentences when explaining something new and use concrete terms.
- Focus your attention on developing functional skills. These skills have many names: self-help skills, everyday skills, and independent living skills. They are aptitudes that will not only assist children in managing activities, but that are necessary in helping a child to become more independent.
- Carefully observe to make sure the child is ready to learn a new skill. Trying to teach a functional skill before a child is ready can be confusing, frustrating, and frightening for the child and can sometimes delay the child's ability to learn the skill.
- Use pictures (preferably photographs) to make a set of cards that show step-by-step a process the child will follow. Make a second set of sequence cards to send home.
- Model each step for the child before asking the child to begin a task.

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### Delayed Motor Development

A child with delayed or atypical motor development may have difficulty with tasks that require motor skills, such as writing, grasping a paintbrush, walking, running, sitting upright, catching or throwing a ball, and standing. The causes of atypical or delayed motor development vary and can occur for many reasons, such as brain damage (occurring before or during birth), orthopedic problems, genetic defects, developmental delays, and sensory impairments.

#### Children with motor impairments:

- require proper positioning in order to be physically comfortable enough to learn new concepts. If a child is uncomfortable, the child will not be able to concentrate.
- may fatigue more quickly because it takes more effort to accomplish a motor task.
- can usually participate in most activities with simple adaptations.

#### Teaching Strategies

Motor development includes two types of motor skills: fine motor skills and gross motor skills. A child who has difficulty with fine motor skills will have problems doing tasks that require detailed movement. A child who has difficulty with gross motor skills will have difficulty running, throwing a ball, or stacking blocks.

- Consult with a physical therapist (PT) or an occupational therapist (OT) to learn about adaptive devices that will help children with simple tasks.
- Add metal nuts to a pencil to give it more weight.
- Attach a wooden clothespin to each book page. This gives the child a handle to hold when turning the pages.
- Place a dot of hot glue on the upper left-hand corner of each book page. (Wait for each dot to cool before placing the next.) Children can locate the dot by touch, making it easier to turn the page.
- Attach a metal paper clip to the upper left-hand corner of each book page. This provides something for the child to grasp.
- Change the child's position often so the child is comfortable.
- If the child becomes tired or fatigued by a new activity, allow time for rest.
- Try alternative seating arrangements, such as therapy balls or beanbag chairs.
- If the child is in a wheelchair, make sure all materials are easily accessible.
- Offer adaptations and alternatives to classroom activities that require physical movement. For example, a child with limited gross motor ability might have difficulty coordinating her feet and leg movements to hop along a hopscotch path. Encourage the child to participate by walking or stepping instead of hopping.



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### Communication Disorders

Communication is divided into *receptive* and *expressive* language. Receptive language describes how children receive messages and information. Expressive language describes how children deliver messages and express themselves. Children can receive messages much earlier than they can generate them. Therefore, children's receptive language develops before their expressive language.

#### Children with speech and language delays:

- understand directions best when they are communicated with short and simple sentences.
- may require assistance understanding how to respond or what is being required so they will feel comfortable participating.
- may require an alternative method of communication, such as a communication board.
- benefit from feeling understood by others.
- may require assistance to know which words to use and how to say them in a way that others around them can understand.



#### Teaching Strategies

- Ask children questions about things that interest them. Encourage children to use descriptive words (e.g., color words, size words).
- Use the *slotting* technique. Begin a sentence and leave a blank for the child to complete the sentence.
- Teach children some simple sign language to bridge the communication gap between nonverbal language (signs) and verbal language (spoken words).
- If you do not understand what a child is saying, do not look away or act frustrated. This only makes the child more anxious. When a child gets frustrated or starts to cry and throw objects, assess the situation and try to verbalize what the child might be feeling: "Austin, you are upset because you did not want to stop building with the blocks."
- Use simple sentences and ask the child to repeat what you say. Describe for the child what is going on in the classroom, and use picture clues to accompany what you are saying.
- Create simple picture schedules. Draw or cut out simple pictures that show daily activities or the steps for completing a routine task, such as hand washing. Glue pictures onto construction paper. Laminate the pictures or cover them with clear self-adhesive paper. Use Velcro or tape to attach the pictures to a display area.

